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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 001782

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL SF ZI

SUBJECT: IRI DOUBTFUL THAT MDC WILL MEET ITS OWN EXPECTATIONS

PRETORIA 00001782 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Political Counselor Raymond L. Brown. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. On 8 August, PolOff met with IRI Zimbabwe Country Director Djordje Todorovic to gather his impressions of the MDC since moving to South Africa in March. He admitted that he had difficulty getting started, but that MDC members are much more responsive to him now, though he is often left with the impression that they view him as a funding opportunity more than a political resource. He said the MDC equates itself with the ANC, and feels Zimbabwe's historical trajectory will mirror South Africa's political transition. However, the reality, he said, is that he fears that the MDC is a fragmented party with no common ideology that is likely to fall apart soon after Mugabe is gone. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On 8 August, PolOff met with IRI Zimbabwe Country Director Djordje Todorovic to gather his impressions of the MDC since moving to South Africa at the end of March. For much of April and May, Todorovic said he found it difficult to work with anyone in MDC as they were either hastily preparing for the run-off or in a holding pattern waiting for direction, with times where the party seemed equally split among the two scenarios. With MDC Treasurer Roy Bennett's help and word of mouth among MDC circles in Johannesburg, Todorovic said he has been able to make some progress. Over the past two weeks, Todorovic has brought two groups down from Harare for two-day training sessions. The first group included 14 members of the MDC secretariat and the second one included their information services (i.e., public relations) department. Training focused on leadership skills, team building, and what he called "basic party work" like door-to-door campaigning, creating party databases, and generating internal reporting mechanisms to keep everyone informed. Todorovic said both groups had been through generic team-building/leadership exercises before, but that it was obvious that they had not received training on party mechanics.

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FIRST IMPRESSIONS CENTER AROUND MONEY  
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3.(C) Overall, Todorovic said he was impressed with everyone who attended his training sessions. They all seemed motivated and committed, and worked well together, he said. More specifically, he said two people stood out among the rest: Toendepi Shonhe, Director General, and Luke Tamborinyoka, Director of Information and Publicity. Shonhe, he said, was extremely responsive and "the person you go to when you want something done." Tamborinyoka, a former

professional journalist, stood out as extremely intelligent and good at what he does. Todorovic's only complaint was that everytime any idea was generated, either by him or the group, their first response was how much money would he give them to implement it.

¶4. (C) Asking if anyone else in the MDC stood out for better or worse, he replied MDC Regional Office Spokesperson Nqobizitha Mlilo and MDC Spokesperson George Sibotshiwe. Todorovic described Mlilo as "young, smart, extremely ambitious, and greedy because the first thing he always asks me for is money." Todorovic also singled Mlilo out because he is a "Che Guevera-loving socialist and a pan-Africanist who generally dislikes white people because he finds them patronizing." Todorovic said he gets on well with Mlilo, but Opatronizing." Todorovic said he gets on well with Mlilo, but he suspects it is in part because he is not American. As for Sibotshiwe, Todorovic said he also comes across as extremely ambitious. In fact, Mlilo and Sibotshiwe have become inter-party rivals, he said. (BIO NOTE: Both Mlilo and Sibotshiwe were "discovered" by Roy Bennett in Cape Town sometime last year. Bennett hired Sibotshiwe, who has ambitions to either star or make movies in Hollywood, to be Tsvangirai's personal assistant. According to MDC advisor Stuart Doran, Sibotshiwe was initially devoted to Bennett and would serve as his "spy." However, at some point, Sibotshiwe became more loyal to Tsvangirai than Bennett. Numerous MDC contacts, as well as Todorovic, say they distrust Sibotshiwe, with the most common complaint being "George takes care of himself first." Sibotshiwe "fled" to Johannesburg soon after the June run-off, complaining that his life was in danger. Few MDC and diplomatic contacts PolOff has spoken to, however, believe he was in danger. END NOTE)

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MDC COMPARES ITSELF TO ANC

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¶5. (C) Todorovic said his interactions with the MDC give him the impression that they mistakenly equate themselves with the ANC. In fact, he said they act as if they have the same international status as the ANC did during apartheid and believe their transition should and will be identical to that of the ANC's. Todorovic added that MDC secretariat members who traveled to South Africa for training told him they needed time to meet with the ANC before they left. (NOTE: Irish Ambassador Colin Wrafter (also accredited to Harare) (protect) told PolOff on 7 August that MDC Leader Morgan Tsvangirai is taking ANC counsel, including ANC heavyweight Cyril Ramaphosa, Mandela's former lawyer George Bizos, Mbeki rival and ANC veteran Mac Maharaj, and Matthew Clarkson who is the son of one of South Africa's first Constitutional Court judges post-apartheid. END NOTE)

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MDC LACKS IDEOLOGY AND LEADERSHIP

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¶6. (C) Coming directly from Iraq, Todorovic said he would describe the MDC as a movement, rather than a party. He said for now, they share the common goal of removing Mugabe, but as soon as he is gone, what little cohesion they have now will quickly dissipate. Todorovic called the MDC's ideology "schizophrenic," adding that the MDC is filled with everyone from anarchists to right wingers. Asked about rumors of splits within Tsvangirai's faction, Todorovic admitted that many people he has spoken to complain about Tsvangirai's lack of leadership since the 29 March election. He said there are jokes circulating within the MDC like, "Morgan may be driving the bus, but no one is in it," or "The bus has stopped, but Morgan still thinks he's driving." However, while he feels many in the MDC are unhappy with Tsvangirai, he said he does not see anyone who can easily take his place. (COMMENT: Numerous MDC contacts and civil society members over the past

two weeks have complained about the lack of information and consultation coming out of the negotiations, fueling rumors that Tsvangirai is about to "sell out." MDC Advisor Stuart Doran said on 7 August that even Secretary General Tendai Biti is complaining about being cut out of the negotiating process. While Tsvangirai has made it clear to US and other diplomats that he is standing firm on principle, the secrecy surrounding the negotiations is simply causing people to speculate the worst. END COMMENT)

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